

## Dance Review To The Ones I Love ★★★★★

Is there such a thing as pure dance? The programme note to Compagnie Thor's To The Ones I Love teases us with that notion, happily talking of conveying the body in movement, the pleasure of dancing and how the lack of anything resembling a story directs the impact to the senses rather than the mind.

But, rather like the dancers in one of the touch-and-go duets he favours, Belgian choreographer Thierry Smits is gently pulling our leg. Put nine black male dancers of

African origin on a bright white stage and then marry a mix of dance styles, from contemporary to classical by way of capoeira, to the baroque rhythms of Bach, and the rich palette of influences can't help but suggest a host of human tales.

The dance, a loose-limbed and fluid coalition of muscle and grace, has the life experience of its dancers bred in the bone.

They occasionally dress each other in vests and waistcoats, the simple act of collaboration and cooperation suggesting the

power of social bonding. The ever-shifting colourways and the dancers sporting a rainbow of coordinated tops gently evoke the shifting state of the human condition.

The jury is out on pure dance but who cares when To The Ones I Love offers a celebration of multi-culturalism in quietly joyous form.

*Keith Watson*

*Until tomorrow, Barbican, 7.45pm, £16 to £26. Tel: 0845 120 7550. [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk) Tube: Barbican/Moorgate*